Organizing the Interaction of Nations Participating in a Multi-national Operation

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INTRODUCTION

Peace operations under UN aegis have been conducted for nearly fifty years, and improvements are continually made in their conduct, both in overall operation effectiveness and in the planning and execution process. One of the most challenging areas of modern peacekeeping involves increasing an operation's effectiveness through timely insertion of a contingent into the conflict zone. This issue overlaps with the need to optimize further the training process of contingents.

Improvement is needed in coordination among the UN structures responsible for a given zone of responsibility, among the civil-miliary components of the participating nations' contingents in this future operation, and between these two groups.

The peacekeeping operations of the last ten years have pointed up a number of important weaknesses in orchestrating interaction, particularly in Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and other countries, due to the absence of any optimal mechanism for this purpose within the UN structures themselves.

What real coordination problems currently exist in the UN? First, a primary problem has been the lack of attention afforded to the whole issue of coordination, both in the sense of creating a special coordinating body and in the sense of setting up coordination procedures.

Second, for several good reasons the participating nations cannot themselves take the initiative in this area, not prior to the naming of the necessary leadership and staffs. Initially, the participating nations do not yet know the nature of their missions, the contingent's composition, who their neighbors will be, etc.

Thus, a mechanism should also be developed that would improve coordination, optimizing both the time needed to organize an operation (no longer than one month) and the operation's efficiency (avoiding any deviation from the contingent's missions as spelled out in the UN Security Council Mandate).

What are the current difficulties of modern peacekeeping contingents? The following is a brief list of the some of the most important problems:

> 1. Lack of knowledge about the harsh procedures for information exchange within the UN.
> 2. Language problems at the unit-commander level.
> 3. Unique aspects of the mindsets of the national contingents.
> 4. Bureaucratic protocol and communications procedures.
> 5. Lack of any special UN guidelines with formalized interaction documents.

> **I. Recommendations on Selecting Operation Participants and Defining the Criteria for Acceptability**
>
> Of course, the political bodies of the UN will be the primary force in defining the nature, goal, missions, methods, duration, and participants of a given peacekeeping operation. In addition, the recommendations and ideas of the UN's military-staff committee structures could also prove extremely valuable. However, immediately after a political decision has been made, a special staff or department for facilitating the interaction, i.e., a coordination staff, should get to work. Its duties would include:
>
> 1. Informing all possible operation participants as to the operation's goal, time lines, missions and the participants' role.

2. Sending out survey forms, marked "Urgent," (electronically, if possible) containing questions as to intentions, contingent composition and capabilities, terms of the country's contract with the UN, place and time for contact groups to meet in order to clarify the given information ([Appendix A](#)).
3. Dispatching an advance reconnaissance group to the area of the future operation in order to set up a temporary command and control (coordination) point for the advance deployment of contingent units.

After collecting the survey sheets and processing the information they contain, it will obviously be necessary to update somewhat the UN leadership's plan for the operation. As a part of this process, the coordination staff should justify certain requirements for the potential participants, based on the following points:

1. Participants in the operation (a unit or subunit) should:

- Possess professional skills in their specified area (guarding, cargo transport, setting up durable communications, etc.).
- Have the moral stability to endure possible human and material losses.
- Possess essential peacekeeper qualities, the most important of which is neutrality.
- Have the best of the qualities selected, including compatibility with the elements of the system of the international contingent. For example, if a vehicle battalion is being chosen to transport humanitarian assistance, then of three possible battalions offered to the UN, the one chosen should have the best equipment and drivers, as well as a repair and maintenance complex compatible with those of other national contingents.

2. A participant in the operation should not:

- Have any reason for conflict with other operation participants.
- Have any opportunity to exert any influence on the combatants that would run counter to the UN decision.
- Bring discredit upon the mission of the UN either by its own actions or through inaction.

It is also important that operation participants inform one another during this period as to their intentions and capabilities, their preferences as to which countries would occupy neighboring zones of responsibility, etc. Such a document might be called a "Statement of Mutual Information," for example.

Two factors comprise the most important criteria for the military-political leadership chosen:

- Willingness to work in English as the command language.
- Confidence that none of the participants will depart its zone of responsibility without carrying out the appropriate standard UN procedures.

II. Organizing Interaction during the Planning Phase of the Operation

The UN's coordination staff must have standard operating procedures for actions needed during this most responsible period of the operation. The following procedures could be included:

1. A list of the requirements for the interacting groups, including:

- The TO&E structure of the contingent, showing its "compatible" structures (Appendix B).
- A technical model of its communications system, indicating the frequencies needed, call-signs used, and the most important requirements for dependable communications (Appendix C).
- An outline of actions to be taken in emergency circumstances (both natural disasters and technical/equipment emergencies) indicating the rules for evacuation, mutual assistance, and self-help (Appendix D).
- An outline of actions to be taken once a political solution is adopted to cease the operation and draw down the contingent.
- An outline of the TO&E for the non-military structure, including the commander, staff, political section (legal, press, non-government working group) admin section (finance, contracts, etc.).
- Other possible outlines as required for the particular ethnic, climatic, or geographic features of the region of the operation.

2. An "Interaction Planning Chart for the Deployment Phase" showing each stage of the deployment week by week, as well as each participating country's actions at each stage. (This document virtually duplicates a similar one used by the armed forces of most countries in planning "conventional" operations or wars.)

3. A "Technical Coordination Sheet" listing all the most significant technical issues that could help (or hinder) interaction among the national contingents, including the type and characteristics of fuel, lubricants, technical fluids, as well as technical specifications regarding armaments, engineering, communications, medical supply, food, etc. (Appendix E).

4. A document spelling out strict UN prohibitions, i.e., actions that are strictly and categorically forbidden without prior coordination with the UN coordination staff (Appendix F).

5. A brief instruction sheet on the training of liaison teams and on the nature of their work, both for interaction with the UN leadership ("top down") and with neighboring units ("laterally") (Appendix G).

As already mentioned above, interaction inside the UN military contingent is organized by the coordination staff. The military leader of each contingent receives clarification sequentially as he arrives at the location of the operation, or at his base camp. Generally speaking, the personal-contact method is better than the approach of sending documents that define the various interaction issues. The personal method affords a much greater opportunity to answer questions as they arise.

Summing up this section on organizing interaction during the operation planning phase, it is essential to emphasize questions that must be answered for each national contingent prior to the practical local deployment:

- Approximate zone of responsibility, and the airfields (ports, stations) available for the first landings of advance echelons.
- Identity of neighboring units, and the dividing lines between them.
- Rules on reporting "up the chain" (to whom, when, how).
- System for mutual identification of UN contingent units, including aircraft and naval vessels.
- Forbidden zones (dangerous zones).

III. Organizing Interaction during the Deployment of Advance Elements

This period of the operation presents a special challenge in regard to organizing the interaction. It begins with the arrival of the first national contingent units (including reconnaissance groups or advance command-and-control points) and concludes with the handing over of interaction documents from the UN coordination staff to the commander of the international contingent. This period may take from one to two months, depending on the situation, scope of the operation, geographical region, etc.

The most complicated aspect of this phase is the close coordination of all elements of the arriving troops (combat units, logistics units, military and civilian police, engineering and technical units, finance and admin staffs and media representatives), as well as of the national contingents, which must make optimal use of the capacity of the host country's infrastructure (airfields, ports, train stations, etc.). An Interaction Planning Chart here would include: the advance reconnaissance group, the UN political and military leadership, the military and civilian leadership of the conflict region, the military and civilian leadership of the participating countries, the UN coordination staff and the designated leadership of the operation.

Most difficult is optimal usage of the local infrastructure, avoiding any "mess-ups" that could result in accidents and injuries (e.g., the simultaneous arrival of two or more aircraft, etc.). The dispatcher service, assisted by the coordination office, plays a key role. The coordination office manages the sequencing of the arriving elements of the contingents either to their base locations or assembly areas. A special "Interaction Planning Chart" is prepared for this period.

Next, as the troops become concentrated in the target country, they are distributed according to a plan (that is continuously updated) over their areas/zones of responsibility. Within their own zones, interaction among these troops is only loosely outlined by the coordination staff, with the commanders clarifying and setting forth the specifics in their operations plan and its appendixes.

At approximately this time, i.e., after the completion of the arrival of the participating countries' advance elements, the coordination staff must then transfer to the peacekeeping

force commander all of the most important documents relating to the interaction of the individual contingents (Appendix H).

What are the most important goals of the interaction during this period? As always, the primary goal remains the personal and collective safety of personnel, protecting the "image of the UN" as the most authoritative world organization, and preserving the integrity of the UN's material resources that are not the property of the participating countries (light vehicles, computers, communications equipment, etc.). In order to assure that these goals are met, the deployment interaction must be organized, and a planning chart should be used. As mentioned above, most nations' militaries use such a document in planning "conventional" operations, and it is advisable to use such a document here, as well.

Two possible conclusions are suggested here regarding the process of optimizing interaction during a new peacekeeping operation:

- The existing mechanism for organizing interaction could be improved by creating a small, specialized coordination staff under the leadership of the director of the UN military-staff committee.
- A document standardization committee could be created; it would draw upon the best features of each national army's documentation and also establish a universal documentation that would serve the UN as a whole, and each participating country individually.

IV. Organizing Interaction during the Draw-Down Phase of a UN Operation

Once a decision has been made as to a date for completion of the operation and withdrawal of the military contingent, the coordination staff must immediately develop an appropriate contingent withdrawal plan. After this plan is approved, the coordination staff needs to get busy organizing the interaction during this final phase of the operation.

In deciding the order of departure of the national contingents, a number of factors are considered, the most important of which include:

- The political advisability that certain contingents depart before others, and assuring the stability of the process.
- The economic arguments of the participating countries and the UN as a whole.
- The greater or lesser mobility of certain contingents and whether they have their own means of transportation.
- The existence of security risks and threats, etc.

What additional factors must be considered during the withdrawal phase? The following is a suggested list based on past operations:

- Operational capacity of the host country's infrastructure, so that the units departing for their home countries can be optimally distributed.

- Possible aggression on the part of opposition forces in the country of the conflict; history has shown that such forces exploit this final stage of the operation as their best opportunity to seize the greatest possible quantity of material resources.
- Mandatory preliminary agreements with the local authorities as to the draw-down sequence and the delineation of powers during this period.
- Maximum effectiveness of the UN financial and auditing services prior to any of the participating countries' signing of closure documents.
- Close contact with law enforcement agencies of the host country and with the civilian and military police of the UN.

The experience of completed UN peacekeeping operations indicates that once the participating countries' national contingents have been evacuated, the UN's liquidation committee needs one to two months in the host area and an additional two to three months at their headquarters in order to complete a full inventory of all property and documentation. Assistance from the coordination staff is also needed in this phase.

The factors involved in making such decisions are not all military ones and lie beyond the scope of this paper. It is only important to know which aspects of the situation will have the greatest effect on the close and effective interaction of the military contingents, an area that is particularly problematic during a "rapid" draw-down, as was the case in Somalia.

Appendix A

Information Survey

1. Which units might a given country offer to join the contingent:

- composition and capabilities
- within what time period
- preferred mode of transport and desired disembarkation areas
- which countries' contingents would be preferred as partners
- for how long (rotation period)
- under what circumstances might the agreement be abrogated

2. Limitations

- Ethnic, religious, climatic (and other) limitations
- Particularities of national cuisine (limitations)
- Technical, transportatiion and financial limitations

3. Rules in Support of Liaison Efforts

- Information on providing liaison support (contact groups)

Appendix B

Table of Organization Requirements

Requirement: Each participating country must make available a contingent whose structure includes at least the following elements:

1. Personnel Section
2. Information Section
3. Operations Section
4. Liaison Section
5. Signal, engineering, technical and logistics section

Desirable: Availability of humanitarian aid specialists, media-relations specialists, finance and credit personnel, and legal services.

Appendix C

Communications System Requirements

Requirement: Each participating country must make available a contingent with the following communications characteristics:

1. A minimum of two channels "upward," i.e., to the mission's leadership
2. At least two lines to neighboring units
3. At least one channel for contact with aircraft
4. At least two channels for contact with the combatants
5. Two doubling lines (for back-up), with at least one of them secure

Primary Characteristics:

Frequencies and bands
Number of fixed frequencies, etc.

Appendix D

Actions to be Taken by the National Contingent in Emergencies

(With Overall Coordination from International Contingent)

Assistance to the Local Population

Interaction with:

- local authorities
- agencies responsible for rescue
- troops bases, civilian and military police
- agencies for transportation, medical, construction, humanitarian aid, non-government international organizations, etc.

Self-Help

Interaction with:

- Neighboring units for mutual information and for search and evacuation actions.
- Upper and lower levels, reports and orders.
- Organization collecting information on the disaster, offering forecasts and preparing for the relocation of the contingent.

Appendix E

Technical Coordination Sheet

The national contingent of (name of country)_____utilizes the following nomenclature and designations for its equipment in accordance with_____.

1. Fuels and Lubricants

    --gasoline   ; _____
    --diesel fuel   ; _____
    --motor oil   ; _____
    --transmission fluid ; _____
    --other (specify)   ; _____

2. Designations of Primary Ammunition

    --for light infantry weapons   ; _____
    --for heavy infantry weapons   ; _____
    --for artillery systems   ; _____
    --for mortars   ; _____
    --for armored combat vehicle canons ; _____

--mines anti-personnel   ; _____

;;;;;;;;;;;;; anti-tank   ; _____

3. Designations of Medical Equipment

--Blood banks, blood types   ; _____

--Blood substitutes, rhesus factor ; _____

4. Food Designations

--Water ; _____

--Meat   ; _____

Appendix F

Actions Prohibited the UN Contingent

Personnel of the national contingents, prior to issue of the commander's operation directive, **MAY NOT:**

1. Fire for effect, except in self-defense.
2. Lay any type of mines or explosive devices.
3. Take any actions that could be perceived by the local population as a violation of their rights on the part of the UN contingent. The legitimacy of such actions (for example, limiting movement) must be established in written orders and the local population must be publicly notified of such legitimacy.

Appendix G

Instructions for National Contingent Liaison Teams

1. A liaison officer must:

- Have a good command of English.
- Possess strong skills in organizing contacts.
- Exhibit good-will and be communicative.
- Have experience in preparing documents on a personal computer, using communications equipment and operating a vehicle.

2. In organizing vertical ("up-down") communication, it is essential to:

- Clearly understand directives from above and accurately convey them down the chain.
- Fully understand the essence of unit actions, sifting out the most important information and passing it up the chain.
- Act as more than a "telephone" -- be able to take responsibility when there is danger of mutual misunderstanding.

3. In organizing lateral communications, it is essential to:

- Strive for complete mutual understanding, taking into consideration the unique aspects of the sides' mindsets.
- On points of contention, go "up the chain" for guidance, not out of self-interest but for the sake of the UN operation as a whole.

Appendix H

Suggested List of Interaction Documents for National Contingents

1. Charts of "top-down" interaction with various sections:

- personnel section
- information section
- operations section
- logistics section
- humanitarian assistance section
- engineering section
- liaison section

2. Chart of interaction with the political and administrative chain of the UN leadership.

3. Chart of interaction with:

- the warring sides
- neighboring units

4. Interaction Planning Table.

5. A "Standard Operating Procedures" on interaction.

6. Documents on interaction with local authorities, non-governmental organizations, UN organizations, the media and other affected bodies.

Biographical Sketch:

Colonel Anddrei Demurenko was the first Russian officer to study at the Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, KS (1992-93). In January of 1995 Colonel Demurenko arrived in Sarajevo, where he assumed the post of chief of staff of the UN's Sarajevo sector. At the time he wrote this article, Colonel Demurenko was serving on the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces.